

TRANSCRIPTIONS

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Next Issue:

-Information about Children's Special Health Care Services (CSHCS)

-Update on the Indiana Birth Defects Surveillance System (IBDSS)

-Report from the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) Annual Conference

....and more

Message from Gregory A. Wilson, M.D. State Health Commissioner

In the next few years genetics will move from the laboratory to local health care delivery. Genetics will move from isolated applications such as prenatal counseling to involvement in every aspect of public health. We are just beginning to realize the potential of our newfound knowledge and understand that genetics will be just as important in managing chronic diseases as it is in newborn screening. Genetics will become an integral tool in diverse programs, similar to our present use of epidemiology in implementing public health programs. The perspective on genetics is changing so dramatically that there is presently a movement to change the name of the field to Genomics to symbolize the broad reach of this field.

The technology is already beginning to move faster than our ability to deal with it. We are faced with the ethical dilemmas such as commercially available genetic mapping without a comprehensive counseling component. The ethical and technical challenges will grow over the next several decades, and as public health professionals we need to become much more knowledgeable in the area of genetics. The genetics toolkit produced by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) is an excellent resource in improving our fund of knowledge and preparing ourselves to deal with these issues. This guide can be found on the Web at www.genomicstoolkit.org. As a public health workforce, we all need to begin to improve our expertise in the area of genetics, regardless of our present area of focus in public health.

Teratology: "Is it safe to take _____ during pregnancy?"

How many times have you been asked by a patient, or wondered yourself, whether certain medications are safe to take during pregnancy? "What about... the carbon monoxide from our furnace malfunction? The mercury in the fish we caught? The alcohol I drank before I knew I was pregnant?" The Indiana Teratogen Information Service (INTIS) is a nonprofit service that offers free information and answers to these questions and more about the risks of medications and other exposures during pregnancy and lactation.

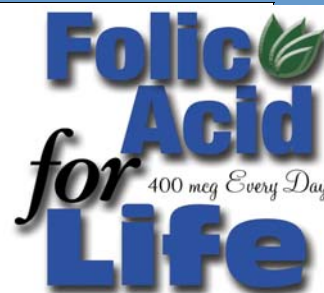
A teratogen is any substance taken prior to or during pregnancy that causes permanent changes in the fetus, ranging from pregnancy loss to an infant with birth defects to a child with developmental delays and behavioral problems. But why are some babies affected with fetal alcohol syndrome when others exposed to the same amount of alcohol are not? Why does spina bifida occur in some pregnancies exposed to maternal anticonvulsants while others are spared? Although some such variation depends upon the timing, quantity and duration of the exposure, scientists are now learning that specific genes may serve to alter the effects of certain exposures. Even teratogens cannot escape the influence of the human genome!

Common categories of inquiry to INTIS include prescription and over-the-counter medications, drugs and alcohol, maternal infections and vaccines, X-rays and other environmental agents, and workplace exposures to various chemicals. Both professionals and the general public are

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For Information about the folic acid campaign contact:

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Folic Acid for Life...400mcg Every Day **Indiana Folic Acid Campaign**

Folic acid (a B vitamin) has been shown to reduce the incidence of neural tube defects, which are defects of the head and spine (e.g. spina bifida), by 50-70%. According to August 2003 March of Dimes and Gallup surveys: only 1 in 7 women know that folic acid helps prevent neural tube defects; 9 out of 10 women do not know that folic acid must be consumed prior to pregnancy to be effective; and only 32% of women take folic acid supplements. Recent studies also suggest that folic acid may help prevent heart disease, stroke and certain cancers, especially colon cancer. While these studies have not proven a protective effect, they suggest that many people may benefit from taking folic acid. It is very difficult to get enough folic acid from food alone. Therefore it is important to take a multivitamin, a folic acid supplement or to eat a fortified breakfast cereal that contains 100% of the recommended daily amount of folic acid (400mcg).

In 1998, the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) Children's Special Health Care Services, Maternal and Child Health Services, and the Women, Infants and Children Program began a Folic Acid Awareness Campaign. The goal of this campaign has been to decrease the incidence of neural tube defects through the use of a statewide educational campaign promoting adequate folic acid consumption before pregnancy and during the first trimester of pregnancy. The target population for the campaign includes all women of childbearing age, whether or not they are contemplating pregnancy.

In 2004, the campaign continues but will take on a new look and new materials. The campaign will be expanded to increase awareness of the additional benefits of folic acid, like a decreased risk for cardiovascular disease and cervical and colon cancer. We will continue to target all women of childbearing age, but our efforts will expand to encourage physicians and other healthcare providers to recommend folic acid daily. Also, mass media activities are planned that will include a Web page, print ads, brochures, and grocery store shelf tags and placards highlighting multivitamins, breakfast cereals and other food sources that contain 400mcg folic acid. Additionally a 'Birth Defects and Folic Acid' module is being developed to fit into middle school and high school curriculums. This will be presented at the Hoosier Association of Science Teachers, Inc. annual conference February 18-20, 2004. A "Folic Acid for Life" videoconference will be held for healthcare professionals March 11, 2004, from Purdue University campus.

You can also make a difference. Help support the campaign efforts by becoming an advocate. Encourage family, friends, and coworkers to take a multivitamin or a folic acid supplement, or to eat a fortified breakfast cereal that contains 100% of the recommended daily amount of folic acid (400mcg).

Indianapolis Healthy Start

Indianapolis Healthy Start (IHS) is a community based program with the mission of improving the health of mothers and babies by preventing infant mortality, improving birth outcomes, and eliminating health disparities in Marion County. IHS is one of 96 programs across the country funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA.) The four year grant (June 2001 - May 2005) is funded to provide health care services for pregnant women who are at risk for poor birth outcomes, and focuses on getting women into prenatal care as early in the pregnancy as possible.

There are 3 main services that make up Indianapolis Healthy Start:

- Case Management:** Similar to care coordination, IHS case managers work one-on-one with pregnant women and provide services to mom and baby until the child is two years old. During this time, case managers help families access important medical and social resources. They also help pregnant moms understand the importance of a proper diet, prenatal care, smoking cessation,

"Folic Acid for Life"
conference will be held

for healthcare
professionals on

March 11, 2004

11 am-1 pm

For registration
information:

<http://www.ces.purdue.edu/folicacid/>

Article written by:

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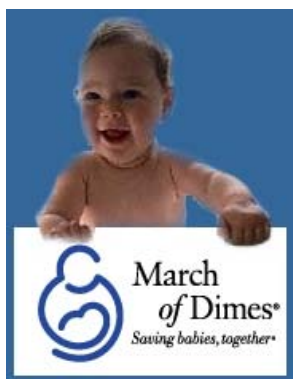
Healthy Start Sites:

1. A.C.T.I.O.N. Center
2. Citizens Health Center
3. Legacy House
4. Minority Health Coalition of Marion County
5. People's Health Center
6. St. Francis Neighborhood Health Center
7. St. Vincent Hospitals and Health Services
8. Wishard Health services
9. Indiana University School of Nursing MOM Project. (bilingual services)

For additional information about Indianapolis Healthy Start, please call (317) 221-2317.

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Chapter



Indianapolis Healthy Start Continued



and breastfeeding. Additional health topics are addressed based on individual client needs. Case managers also provide interconceptional care, including screening mothers for postpartum depression, health education on a variety of topics including family planning, and referral to any needed services. Two of the case managers specialize in working with victims of domestic violence.

•**Health Education:** IHS has many education classes available at several locations across Marion County to address pregnancy and parenting topics. The classes are free and open to anyone interested in learning more: moms, dads, aunts, grandmothers, caregivers, etc. Health education classes are also provided to teens in conjunction with several schools in Marion County.

•**Outreach:** IHS outreach services are designed to raise community awareness about issues related to infant health. The outreach worker speaks to numerous groups on such topics as: folic acid, family planning, breastfeeding, teen pregnancy, safe sleep, as well as many others. Staff also speak to individuals in the community, and encourage pregnant women to receive prenatal care or help them to access services.

March of Dimes Unveils Two Exciting New Genetics Education Products

Building on its long track record of educating the public and healthcare providers about genetics, the March of Dimes recently introduced two new offerings - *Genetics and Your Practice Online* and an updated *Genetics and Your Practice CD-ROM*.

The development of *Genetics and Your Practice Online* was partially funded by a \$750,000 Robert Wood Johnson grant and is geared toward primary care practitioners, allied health practitioners, and consumers. It has been reviewed by 12 national organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Nurses Association, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. This website was created because most professionals practicing today have not had the benefit of genetics training, but 88% of consumers expect their healthcare providers to answer genetic questions. This website, www.marchofdimes.com/gyponline, is designed to provide: practical information, downloadable tools, patient education materials, decision trees, case studies, genetic test information, and referral guidelines. In addition, this site is free, (registration required) and free Continuing Medical Education (CMEs) may be obtained.

The revised *Genetics and Your Practice CD-ROM*, (\$20) can be ordered by calling (800) 367-6630 or contacting Jan Petty or Ernie Yeager at the March of Dimes Indiana Chapter at (317) 262-4668 or (800) 844-9255. The item number is #09164203 and the Indiana ID code is IN354. The March of Dimes hopes that Indiana genetics professionals will work with us to get the word out to primary care practitioners about these useful tools.

Coordinator's Corner

A lot has changed at the Indiana State Department of Health since the last issue of *Transcriptions* in the Fall of 2000. Since I came on board a year ago, we have renamed the "Genetics Program" the "Genomics Program" to be more inclusive. In addition to heredity, genomics encompasses gene-environment interactions and the roles of genes in health and disease. If you are interested in receiving future issues of this quarterly newsletter, please contact me by email at kschwand@isdh.state.in.us or by phone at (317) 233-1268.

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web!
At [http://www.in.gov/isdh/
programs/mch/
adn.htm](http://www.in.gov/isdh/programs/mch/adn.htm)***



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Teratology...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

welcome to call with inquiries about these substances. The general public is provided with telephone counseling regarding their particular risks. Physicians, nurses, genetic counselors and other medical professionals may choose to receive a faxed summary of information for their future reference.

A member of the Organization of Teratogen Information Services (OTIS), a network of teratogen services that extends across the United States and Canada, INTIS subscribes to the most current and relevant teratogen databases available. Many callers are surprised to learn that the Physician's Desk Reference is not the preferred source for interpreting the risks associated with medications used during pregnancy or that the FDA's drug rating system is being re-written to more accurately reflect known drug risks.



In each upcoming edition of Transcriptions, INTIS will provide an overview of one common pregnancy exposure, including its risks for causing pregnancy loss, birth defects or developmental problems, as well as any risks associated with its use during lactation. To reach INTIS with additional inquiries, callers may dial 317-274-1071. INTIS hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. EST Monday through Friday, and every effort is made to provide information to callers within 24 hours of their call. INTIS is funded with State and federal dollars from the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant, authorized by Title V of the Social Security Act.